

Yet, dark masses of boot polish and young courage—fighting knives gripped tightly in hand, elements purged consciously from thought—advanced against the Wehrmacht and held strong against forces of fascism.

The Devil's Brigade, heeding Churchill's call for "specially trained troops of the hunter class" who might unleash "a reign of terror" against the Nazis, became a feared adversary.

But these "Devils" only rented space in the shadows. They moved within darkness in order to defeat it.

And today, here they are. Champions of freedom. Heroes in two nations. Saviors to many others.

To you, we offer our most profound gratitude for distinguished service.

To the families gathered today, know that your loved one made a difference. Know that the veteran you've loved made a contribution to history that we as a people will not soon forget.

As the son of a World War II veteran, I'm particularly determined to ensure we don't.

That's why we will soon dedicate the highest civilian honor Congress can bestow.

It may only be a piece of metal, but it carries the gratitude of a nation.

May you always remember it.

KENTUCKIANS CELEBRATING THE VIETNAMESE LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish our friends in the Vietnamese-American community in Louisville, KY, and across the Commonwealth, a very merry celebration of Tet Nguyen Dan. Tet Nguyen Dan means "first day," and is the celebration of the Vietnamese Lunar New Year and the arrival of Spring. The Lunar New Year is the most important celebration in traditional Vietnamese culture. This year it falls on February 19.

The celebration of the Lunar New Year lasts for several days. It is seen as the precursor for events of the coming year, and therefore is celebrated by paying homage to one's ancestors, having family reunions, and paying old debts.

At midnight of the Lunar New Year, the event is celebrated with firecrackers, gongs, and drums. Children wear new clothes to visit their relatives, and elders offer children little red envelopes full of money.

The festival then continues for several days with special events on each day. Many traditional foods are served during the Lunar New Year celebrations, including banh chung, a dish made of sticky rice, and mung beans and pork, all wrapped in banana leaves.

Of course, one doesn't have to be in Vietnam to celebrate the Lunar New Year. Louisville has a strong and vibrant Vietnamese-American community that contributes to the mosaic that is the River City, and this year they will celebrate the Lunar New Year with great gusto. Celebrations are scheduled across the city for several days.

I know that Louisville and the Commonwealth of Kentucky are better off for the values that Vietnamese-Americans celebrate during Tet Nguyen Dan—love of family, appreciation of

one's elders and ancestors, and optimism about the times ahead. I convey to my friends in Kentucky's Vietnamese-American community my best wishes and I ask my U.S. Senate colleagues to join me in wishing them a happy, healthy, and prosperous Lunar New Year.

CLAY HUNT SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR AMERICAN VETERANS ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am a proud cosponsor of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act and am pleased my colleagues chose to support it unanimously. The bill is designed to help reduce—and hopefully eliminate—veteran suicides by improving access to and quality of mental health care for veterans.

An estimated 22 veterans a day take their own lives. That is twice as high as the general population. Veterans of all ages and from all wars are affected by conditions that can contribute to depression and thoughts of suicide. We are learning more and more, for example, about how common post-traumatic stress disorder is among our returning heroes. PTSD can surface years—even decades—after a veteran was in combat. It is one of many factors that contribute to this disheartening problem.

The number of suicides is disproportionately high, however, for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Young men and women just out of the service and receiving health care from the government committed suicide at nearly three times the rate of active-duty troops in 2012. We have to work harder to make sure our heroes have access to the help they need.

The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act will create a peer support and community outreach pilot program to connect transitioning service members with programs that could help them. The bill will create a pilot program to repay the loan debt of psychiatry students so it is easier to recruit them to work at the VA. It also will improve the accountability of VA mental health and suicide-prevention programs by requiring an annual evaluation.

Today, in a bipartisan fashion, the Senate said we need to do more to make sure our heroes have access to the assistance they need. I hope the step we took here today helps many veterans regain a path to wellness and happiness.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise today to commend my colleagues for swift passage of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act. This act will build upon the Veterans Choice Act and put in place needed measures to improve responsiveness, reporting, oversight and accountability for mental health outreach, intervention, treatment, and counseling in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sometimes the greatest hurdle for ailing veterans is just getting started. There is nothing more frustrating and poten-

tially demoralizing and debilitating for a veteran in crisis to seek mental health care from the VA and be told he will have to wait weeks or months for an appointment because VA facilities lack sufficient personnel with an expertise in psychiatric medicine to provide timely care. Left to fend on their own, many veterans become depressed and feel powerless, some resort to high-risk behaviors, from isolation, self-medication with alcohol and prescription drugs, to suicide.

This bill authorizes a pilot program to expand the VA's capacity to help repay loans incurred by individuals who are eligible to practice psychiatric medicine and agree to serve the VA in that field. In doing so, we recognize that serving veterans is a noble cause that some are called to, but working in such a demanding field requires economic incentives, especially in areas where abundant career options exist or in more remote locales, where attracting talent is difficult for the VA.

The Clay Hunt Act also facilitates greater veteran's access through a consolidated interactive website, where veterans can visit from the privacy of their own home or wherever they may be when the need arises.

Most importantly, the bill directs VA to establish a pilot program for community-based support networks in the VA's Integrated Service Networks to ease the transition of veterans and provide peer-based support for those who are encountering difficulties coping with those life changes. These community outreach teams at each medical center will be aimed at getting care to the point of need with the least amount of delay and help those veterans who are unwilling or unable to seek professional help on their own.

Make no mistake, the suicides of our veterans are preventable with the right intervention and proper continuum of care. When a veteran takes their own life due to untreated mental pain, it is a stark and sobering sign that somewhere, someone who loved them was unable to reach them and recognize the warning signs to help or that the veteran just couldn't carry a heavy burden any longer and found stability or some greater peace and solace elusive. It is at these moments, with nowhere to turn and perhaps no one to trust, that some of our veterans want to escape life. The sooner we can fully transform the VA into a place where veterans in crisis at any time can find access to caregivers and peers ready to light the path to a better place in our society, the better outcomes we will see and the surer we will be that the promises we have made to them are being kept.

RECOGNIZING BURTON SNOWBOARDS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for generations, Vermonters have contributed to the global culture of winter sports. Whether the sport is snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling or